1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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619 have achieved. For the traditional Santal, membership in the
• [175] tribe constitutes the widest bond of social identification. This is true even though as far back as historical records extend (to the early nineteenth century), the Santal have not been politically unified. Beneath the level of the somewhat nebulous tribe there are interpenetrating territorial and kinship organizations.
[634] Territorially, the largest formally organized unit is the *Pargana*
[192] (Hindi = a subdivision of a district), a loose confederation of approximately a dozen villages bound together to settle certain judicial questions. Its proceedings are conducted by a "Chief"
[621] (*Parganath* in Bengali or *Desh-Pradhān* in Hindi). The village (*aṭo*) is the only other formally organized territorial unit and is often divided into sections (*tola* in Hindi). Village "Chiefs"
[622] are known as *Mąñjhi* or *Pradhān* (Hindi = Headman); other
792 village officials include an "Assistant Chief" or "Chiefs" (*Jog-*
[192] *mąñjhi*) and a "Village Priest" (*Naeke*).

614 The widest separate kinship unit is the "Clan" (*Pąris:* or
[192] *Jāti,** Hindi = Caste). According to the Santal creation myth there should be twelve clans; in fact there appear to be only nine. Clan membership, like all inheritance, is determined patrilineally. Containing thousands of members, the clan is, of course, a fictitious kinship unit; apart from bearing a name and the presumption of some common rituals performed by its constituent local lineages, the clan has few "likenesses" to bind it together and does not exist as a corporate unit. The clan is, nonetheless, an exogamous social entity which serves as a reference point establishing kinship relations among all Santal. Santal unable to trace "actual" common relatives can establish their kin relationship via the clan; for example, a non-kin of the same sex and same clan might be regarded as a brother,

* *Jāti* is also used by the Santal to refer to the tribe as a unit.

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177 563 171 As early as the sixteenth century a Munda tribal in the Ranchi district established himself as a local Rājā.[3] By virtue of his wealth and power he attracted reputable Brahmans to his court who Sanskritized his rituals and manufactured for him a Rājput genealogy. Eventually this status was accepted by other Rājputs and marriage ties were established.

177 563 There are numerous other examples, and the Santal themselves have undergone considerable Hindu acculturation and some fission and Hindu assimilation though not nearly to the same degree or in such large numbers as the Bhumij. Hindu-tribal contact in the region has been long and intense. All the tribes in the area have been heavily influenced by Hindu culture, some have been partially and others totally absorbed in the Hindu social order and no doubt many Hindu castes have been so recruited in instances where the historical record is unknown. Why the Bhumij have been assimilated and the Santal, Munda, Ho, and some others have not must be understood by reference to particular historical differences which are beyond the scope of this investigation. However, the examination of Santal historical experience does shed light on the general conditions which are relevant to assimilation as well as on the specific historical events which were crucial to the Santal experience.

• 175 648 669 Perhaps the single most important event in the history of Santal-Hindu relations was the Santal rebellion of 1855–57. This major public event, which first drew the serious attention of India's English rulers to the Santal, reveals at once the nature of Santal-Hindu relations and the strengths and limitations of Santal solidarity. Commemorated in Santal songs and

[3] Roy 1912.

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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175 discussions, it is part of the Santal living cultural heritage and 648 hence of continuing influence.
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Various investigations of the rebellion support Man's conclusion that the following four Santal grievances were chiefly responsible for the rebellion: (1) "grasping and rapacious money lenders"; (2) "personal and hereditary debt bondage"; (3) "corruption and extortion by police helping moneylenders"; (4) "impossibility of Santal getting court redress" (Man 1867: from Culshaw and Archer 1945). A fifth contributing factor of an endogenous nature is what Man describes as Santal "improvidence."[4] Leaving aside Man's pejoratives, there is abundant evidence that his understanding of the rebellion was substantially correct. By legal and extra-legal means the Santal were systematically being stripped of their ownership rights over their land and becoming tenants and even slaves of Hindus who knew how to manipulate the law and were accustomed to gaining their ends in the context of the market.

The Santal felt themselves exploited, and not without cause. The emphasis in their culture on "redistribution"[5] and other leveling mechanisms plus their heavy commitment to "pleasure" made the Santal easy prey of the merchant and moneylender. To the British observers and to the Hindus the Santal were "improvident." Ultimately the Santal erupted in a violent revolt during which they mutilated a number of Hindu moneylenders and took vengeance on guilty and innocent alike. One reads of a Hindu money lender whose limbs were severed one

[4] See Datta 1940 for the most complete bibliography of relevant primary documents.

[5] Polanyi 1957.

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at a time to signify payment of four annas on the rupee, an annual interest rate of twenty-five per cent.[6]

The rebellion was not begun on the spur of the moment as a result of sudden passion. The Santal had made many attempts to present their grievances to the government but were rebuffed for various reasons and by various means. Numerous meetings and communications between Santal villages preceded armed revolt. In spite of the lack of any formal political structure wider than the Pargana, and equipped only with bow and arrow and ax, the Santal were able to overrun all local opposition and even to defeat a crack unit of British-led troops in one skirmish. After intermittent battles lasting over a year the Santal were finally defeated with heavy losses, their rebellious leaders were executed or sent to prison, and the revolt gradually ceased.

Confirmation of official findings and an "inside view" of the rebellion is conveyed by such enduring songs as the following:

> Sido, why are you bathed in blood?
> Kanhu,* why do you cry *hul hul*?†
> For our people we have bathed in blood
> For the merchant thieves have robbed us of our land.[7]
>
> Saheb rule is trouble full;
> Shall we go or shall we stay?
> Eating, drinking, clothing,
> For everything we are troubled.
> Shall we go or shall we stay?[8]

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[6] Culshaw and Archer 1945.
* Sido and Kanhu were the two brothers who led the revolt.
† *Hul* = rebellion.
[7] Archer 1945:207.
[8] Culshaw and Archer 1945:218.

External Solidarity

• 175 Though the Santal demands which preceded the rebellion 648 were limited to relieving their economic plight, the preparations 669 for the rebellion and certain events during its course suggest a more radical intent. For example, two brothers, Sido and Kanhu, proclaimed to their fellow Santal that they had supernaturally received a message to worship *Suba Thakur* (Hindi = Head of a District), presumably a deity associated with the political leadership of a District on the analogy of traditional Santal village and Pargana deities; the brothers claimed that *Suba Thakur* had urged them to lead the Santal people in a rebellion. They announced "We will kill and make an end of all the Deko,* rule ourselves, and whoever does not listen, show him a sword."[9] As the author of a settlement report put it, "A deeper or at any rate a supervening cause [for the rebellion] was the Sonthal yearning for independence, a dream of the ancient days when they had no overlords."[10]

At least those who led the rebellion foresaw in victory not only economic relief but increased political power and an opportunity to improve the rank of the Santal. The goal of rank improvement is suggested by a number of ritual practices emulative of Hindu customs which accompanied the rebellion, such as putting on the sacred thread, ritual use of sun-dried rice and oil and vermilion, and purification with cow dung.[11] While wishing to triumph over the oppressive Hindus, the Santal thought of cashing in on the victory with the traditional Hindu symbols of rank. This ambivalence toward the Hindus is a constant characteristic of Santal-Hindu relations.

[192]

* *Deko*, or *Diku*, as it is pronounced in the south, is a term of opprobrium for foreigners, particularly Hindus.

[9] Culshaw and Archer 1945:2.

[10] McPherson from Culshaw and Archer, *ibid.*

[11] Culshaw and Archer 1945.

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The Santal

175 648 669 The 1855–57 rebellion had its center in the District of Santal Pargana and extended westward into Bhagalpur and southeastward into Birbhum, which at the time were districts of Bengal. Though the rebellion did not directly involve the southern Santal living in the princely states, songs and stories about it did filter south. In 1832 a rebellion had occurred further to the south in the Ranchi District; it probably involved several tribal peoples, especially the Munda.[12] The southern Santal of Seraikela have a tradition of a rebellion having occurred in the latter part of the nineteenth century. They and the rest of the southern Santal, including those of Mayurbhanj, tell a story of two men, sometimes said to be brothers, named Diba and Kisun, whose exploits parallel those of the northern heroes, Sido and Kanhu:

[539] They had such power that within their boundaries no horse could pass; they achieved power from the deities; they were from Matkombeda, a village in Seraikela; they fought against the Rājā; they shot red-hot arrows; they were finally caught; both were of the Soren clan; they were against the government; the government collected many kinds of rent and taxes; Diba said, 'My goats were carried away by a fox, why does the State not give me compensation; my chickens were carried away by a crow, why does the State not give me compensation; the State does nothing so why should the people pay rent and taxes to the State.'

It is said that the children of Diba are still living, and one old man of about sixty claimed that Diba was his sister's father-in-law. Many Parganas are said to have joined the rebellion, but

[12] Thornton 1843.

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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175 it is difficult to estimate the territory involved from the information I obtained.
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669 Though the rebellions of both the northern and southern Santal were unsuccessful, they did draw attention to the plight of the Santal and thus led to enactment of some partially ameliorative judicial and administrative reforms. At the same time, the Santal must have recognized after these defeats that under prevailing conditions, increased political power and improvement in rank were not to be obtained by military might. Evidence to be presented later suggests that this recognition contributed to a decline in solidarity.

173 The dream of ancient days of independence, which, as has
648 been seen, antedated the rebellions, is a kind of dream which is continually nourished by the character of Santal-Hindu social relations. Santal mythology of the nineteenth century and the present is replete with allusions to former days of independence and glory. One favorite myth reported in the nineteenth century and still prevalent describes a mighty kingdom which the Santal once constituted. Each clan had a specialized function, like that of a Hindu caste: the Kisku were kings, the Murmu priests, the Soren warriors, etc.[13] The Santal are thus pictured as independent, powerful, and constituted exactly in the image of an ideal Hindu kingdom. Like all current dreams of the past, this myth expresses current interests. It says that "we were once great as the Hindus presently are." Though serving as a charter for present independence and improved rank, like the emulative symbols of the rebellion, it is Hindu greatness which is sought.

According to mythological history, the Santal were continu-

[13] Bodding 1942:10.

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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177 ized sect adopted a number of critical Hindu symbols of rank,
795 such as wearing the sacred thread. They were said to "regard themselves as socially superior to those who do not wear *suta* (Hindi = sacred thread). The "*janeo dhari* Santal [those who wear the sacred thread] are reluctant to intermarry or have social intercourse with the non-*janeo dhari* Santal."[16] This sect also adjured meat-eating. A prime motivation for the sect's adoption of such practices must have been to attain higher rank.

• 175 Both schisms and solidarity in the period shortly after the
648 rebellion are described by Dalton:

> Santals who are under the example and precept of Bengali Hindus have abjured some practices considered impure by the latter and are called Sat Santal, that is, pure Santal; but there is a national antagonism between them [the Santal] and the Hindus that prevents any close fraternization or communion between the races. They are not over particular about food, but nothing will induce them to eat rice cooked by a Hindu, even a Brahman. Unfortunately, during the famine of 1866 this was not known to us. The cooks who prepared the food distributed at the relief center were all Brahmans and it was supposed that this would suit all classes, but the Santals kept aloof and died rather than eat from the hands so hateful to them.[17]

Dalton has somewhat overdrawn the reluctance of the Santal to fraternize with Hindus, but the event he describes and the tenor of his remarks regarding the hatred and fear that the Santal have of Hindu conform with all other reports.

648 The simultaneous attraction and resistance to the Hindu
186 world appears in the remarks of a sophisticated northern Santal

[16] Majumder 1956:62.
[17] Dalton 1872:214

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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668 pation at the Durga Puja festival. One acculturated Santal
115 opposing acculturation is a mystery which the anthropologist, with his concern for custom, might choose to ignore; but I met such acculturated Santal everywhere, and they proved the most militant opponents of acculturation; indeed, the least militant proved to be the least acculturated and most isolated villagers. The ordinary Santal, a little behind the times, were just getting on to emulation while the elite maneuvered a volte-face. Events of the 1930's explain this change.

• 175 With the approach of independence in the 1930's a new
668 political rank path opened. The British Raj was gradually relinquishing power, and it became evident to sophisticated observers that the days of the princely rulers of Mayurbhanj, Seraikela, and Kharswan were numbered. The day of democratic election was dawning in India. In the north, with headquarters in Ranchi, the Oxford-educated and Christian Munda, Jai Pal Singh, organized an "aboriginal" political party. The proclaimed aim of the party was and is to establish a tribally dominated state within the Indian Union. Such a state would include the geographical area known as the Chotanagpur Plateau and roughly referred to in Indian literature as the Jharkhand. It would include much of southern Bihar, northern Orissa and a thin slice of the western portion of West Bengal. In such a state, which incidentally would contain Jamshedpur and some of the richest mineral deposits in India, tribal peoples would be in a near majority.

The "likenesses" shared by the Mundari-speaking peoples who comprise most of the tribal population of the Jharkhand were available as cultural cement. In the north, Jai Pal successfully brought together the Mundari-speaking Munda and Santal as well as the Dravidian-speaking Oraon, who had long lived

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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175 668 among the Munda and adopted many Mundari traits. In the south he was able to convince the leading members of the Santal and Ho elite to join his political movement. Numerous consultations and meetings were held, a party organization was established near Jamshedpur, and campaigns were planned for Singhbhum and Mayurbhanj. Not only were there political offices of considerable power to fill by democratic elections, but there were a number of special reserved seats for "aboriginals." The rise of Jai Pal and his Jharkhand party meant that the Santal had to make a choice between joining a Hindu-dominated party such as the Congress party or supporting an "aboriginal" party of their own. A substantial majority have continuously decided on the latter course.

668 The initiative to join politically with other tribals has come primarily from the elite. In a tribally-dominated state they envisage themselves as occupying the most powerful positions with unprecedented opportunity for personal and tribal rank improvement. Political democracy reawakened the old dreams of independence and power. While the leading emulators were the Santal traditional and newly educated elite, and the latter most conspicuously alienated from their fellows with respect to culture, neither could look upon the social encroachment of Hindu society with favor. They, above all, had a vested interest in traditional social positions of power and prestige and therefore most to lose from such encroachment. Furthermore, even had they wished to lead their people into a Hindu-dominated political movement, it is doubtful that they would have been able to bring along the mass of uneducated and relatively unacculturated Santal, particularly in competition with a specifically tribal political organization. The fear and hatred of the *diku* are not easily exorcised. A few elite Santal

2; Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

539 (migrated) to the seven-river land Campa[23]. There were two passes, one Cas pass and the other the Campa pass.

In Campa they built a great many forts in order to ensure that enemies should not be able to overcome them. One was the Khairi fort; this was the fort of the Hembrom people; one was the Koṇḍa fort; this belonged to the Kisku people. One was the Campa fort; this belonged to the Murmus. One was the Badoli fort; this belonged to the Maṛḍis; and one was the Sim fort; this belonged to the Ṭuḍu people. There were still other forts; but we have forgotten the names.

In Campa we stayed for ages, and there we were a great people. At that time we were not subordinate to anybody. The 'kings' (rulers) were persons of the Kisku sept. The Murmus were from olden times our priests; we call them Murmu Ṭhakur. The Soren were peons; they were fighters. The Hembrom were the nobility, the Maṛḍis were the wealthy class, and the Ṭuḍus were drumming the dancing- and the kettle-drums, and they were making all kinds of things of iron. The Baske people were buying and selling (merchants). What special work those belonging to the remaining septs had, we do not remember.

Having settled in Campa they placed Marak buru, the Five-Six and the Jaher era[24] in a sacred grove at the end of the village-street and were worshipping them. The Day-spirit they worshipped at sun-rise every fifth year.

Our ancestors of old have, people say, told, that in olden times, when Ram raja was living, at that time all Kharwar people went with him to Loṅka (Ceylon) and helped him to vanquish Rabona raja; for this reason from then on for a very long time we had no fighting or anything of this kind with the Dekus[25]. They were living in the plains and we in the forests and on the hills. But afterwards we got very much fighting with the Dekus; until this day we have no happy relations with them. As soon as we have cleared the jungle in any country, the Dekus come and rob us of it. Still if the Sahibs[26] nowadays did not help them, we should soon drive them to the other side of the Ganges. At the time of the insurrection[27] we had intended to make the Ganges our boundary; but

[823] [114] [778] [829] [671] [175] [669]

[23] It is not possible with any certainty to identify the countries mentioned. Skrefsrud thought that the expression "the country of the seven rivers" might be identified with the present Punjab. Others will identify Cas Campa with the country to the northwest of the present Chota Nagpur. As regards the last mentioned, the same name might have reference to two different countries. [24] lit. The Lady of the Sacred Grove. Every Santal village is to have a sacred grove (jaher) in its vicinity, where possible, a part of the original forest, consisting of sal-trees and at least one Mahua tree. More further on. [25] Deku is the name used by the Santals for a non-Santal of the better class, especially Hindus. A Mohammedan will not be so called, if he is recognized as a Mohammedan. [26] i.e., the European courts. The Santal's ideas of justice are not regulated by written laws. [27] The Santal insurrection of 1855, was not aimed against the Government of the day, but was a misguided attempt to get rid of the money-lenders. The Government naturally had to intervene. This insurrection marks the beginning of a new era for the Santals, according to their own estimation in many ways a beginning of deterioration. The mention of the insurrection here is an anticipation.

3: Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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173 a grassy field called Bàṛi badwak' [Dr. Campbell says that it means a common grass. (*Panicum Colonum*, [262] L.n.). The seeds are eaten during scarcity of food]. Then they crossed a forest and found themselves on the plains of Jona Jòspur. From this place they came over to Khàspal Belaoñja.

Here, they scattered themselves in many directions as they chose. Some went to Sir, some to Sikhàr, while others to Nagpur. Thenceforward, [177] [648] the Santals were, to a greater extent, under Deko (non-Santal) influence. They could preserve their independence only by contracting matrimonial alliances with the Hindus. They are no longer called 101 173 Kharwars. Here an explanation as to why they are called Santals, is forthcoming; for there are some who say that as they lived for some time in the country of Sànt,[1] beyond Sikhàr, they are called Sanotaṛ[2] (*Santal*).

1. Sant = The Santals of Mayurbhanj according to the [175] Census report of 1931, were called Kherwals or Kherwars (Santals Puritan) before they settled in the country round about a place called Saont in Midnapur. P. 151. Risley (*People of India*, App. VIII) says that Santals ruled here for 200 years.

2. From Saont, Risley adds, "Again pressed by the [177] [648] Hindus, they wandered on under a Raja called Hambir Singh to the eastern part of the Manbhum district near [167] Pachet. Here after a while their Rajas adopted the Hindu religion and set up as Rajputs, so that at the present day they intermarry with the family of the Raja of Surguja.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
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173 167 648 Now the Santals and Muṇḍàs parted company. The Santals left Nagpur (Chotanagpur), crossed the Damodar and settled down in Sikharbhum (the modern district of Hazaribagh) and later on, followed the course of the Damodar and passed on to Manbhum[1] and to the Santal Parganas, while the Muṇḍàs preferred to remain in the forest-covered regions of what is now the Ranchi district.[2]

• 175 167 *Historical Basis of Santal Migration in the Santal Parganas*[3]

The history of Santal migrations does not however remain conjectural in the 18th Century, as we have authentic records to go upon. These will show that whatever their original habitat might have been, they were settled in the Chotanagpur plateau and in the adjoining districts of Midnapore and Singhbhum, and that they began to move to the north towards the close of the 18th Century.

[101] In 1795, we find them described as "Soontars" living in Ramgur (Ramgarh), a "rude and unlettered

1. The Santals of Mayurbhanj when questioned by us as to whether they were autocthonus in the place replied that they came from Sili Sikhar, some from Manbhum, while others from Dhalbhum. They asserted that Mayurbhanj was not their original seat.

2. Ref. *The Muṇḍàs and their country*, S. C. Roy, page 111.

[113] 3. With acknowledgements to the *Dt. Gazetteer*, Santal Parganas, Vol.XXII. pp. 95-99.

31 Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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tribe" by Lord Teignmouth (Sir John Shore) "who have reduced the detection and trial of persons suspected of witch-craft to a system." By the first decade of the 19th Century, the Santals had settled in considerable numbers in Lakerdewani *i.e.*, Hundwe and Belpatta of the Santal Parganas, two tracts outside the hills. They had made their way from Birbhum, where they appear to have been brought to clear the country. This is clear from a reference to Montogomery Martin's *Eastern India* (compiled from Buchanan Hamilton's manuscripts) which contains references to the "Saungtar" with their three peculiarities *viz.*, their contempt for Hindu prejudices, their belief in witch-craft, and their communal system. The manuscripts of Buchanan Hamilton refer to 500 such Santal families, who gave their original home as Palamau and Ramgarh. But they came then from Birbhum in consequence of the annoyance of zemindars. They are said to be "very expert in clearing forests and bringing them into cultivation."

By 1819, the Santals had made their way (according to Sutherland's account) in the Godda subdivision and by 1827 to its extreme north. These Santal pioneers were now closely followed by others of their tribes between 1836-51, so that by 1851 (according to Captain Sherwill's accounts) there were no less than 83,265 Santals in the Damin-i-koh alone.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
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In Other Places

• 175 167 As regards the historical basis of Santal migration in the rest of their present settlements, the references in official records point rather to their migratory habit than to any exact date of any settlement. Thus the District Gazetteer of Manbhum (1910), speaks of its Santal population, "A large part of the present population (Santal) springs from families that have been established in the district for four generations or more, and it is perhaps open to doubt whether their establishment in this district was not earlier in date than in the Santal Parganas." The Gazetteer of Birbhum, 1910, repeats the story already mentioned that the Santals migrated to Birbhum towards the close of the 18th Century "being brought to clear the jungles and drive out the wild beasts." As far as Midnapore is concerned, the Gazetteer (1910), [193] refers to the date of Santal settlements in the district as "unknown" but adds "their traditions relate that they came to Saont in course of their wanderings *several centuries ago* (*Italics are ours*)." There is a similar reference to the migratory habits of the Santal in the Gazetteer of the Feudatory States (1910), which mentions that the Santals came to Keonjhar from Singhbhum, Mayurbhanj and Chotanagpur, and on our own enquiries at Mayurbhanj, the Santals said that some came to the State from

3r Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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Sili Sikhar,[1] some from Manbhum, while others from Dhalbhum. They asserted that Mayurbhanj was not their original seat.

Conclusion

We would conclude this chapter with a discussion of the origin of the name "Santal." In this connection, it is worthwhile to remember that the Pre-Dravidian Muṇḍà tribes uniformly designated themselves as Hòṛ, Hòṛò or Ho. The words mean "man." It implies that the tribes were proud enough to consider themselves as men, and indirectly thought of the rest of mankind as sub-human. Even to-day one can hear a Santal saying, "Mit' hòṛ dòñ ñèlledea baṅ dòe Hòṛ kan 'baṅ dòe Diku can" (I saw one man, but I cant't say whether he was a Santal or a non-Santal). The traditional origin of the Santals however consistently refers to them as Kharwars. A legend about the origin of the name was referred to us by Raghunath Mañjhi, teacher of Rairangpur, Mayurbhanj, which goes to show that the forefathers of the tribe got the name from a hero of that name. There are many at Mayurbhanj, who derive

1. 'Sili' is one of the Eastern parganas of the present Ranchi district. 'Sikhar' is probably an abbreviation of 'Sikharbhum', the ancient name of Manbhum dt. It is in the territory of the Raja of Panchacote.

31 Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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All these however lead us nowhere. And all that we can guess in the absence of more reliable evidence is that there is no independent clan amongst the Santals bearing the name of *Kharwars* or *Kherwals*, and that perhaps some Santals when questioned by Man and Col. Dalton gave their clan as *Karwar* or *Kedoar* as the alternative of *Kharwars*, the traditional name for Santals, before they came to Saont or Sant in Midnapore.

It should be mentioned here that Risley in his *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, gives the following equivalent of the general name Santal viz. *Saontar*, *Kharwar*, or *Safa-Hòr* and mentions *Kharwars* or *Safa-Hor* as 'sub-tribes' as well, but not as a sept (clan) name. We should add that the very name *Safa-Hòr* is not now much understood by the Mayurbhanj Santals. But we have very reliable evidence[1] to say that there was, in 1871, a movement in the Santal Parganas known as the *Kharwar movement* when some Santals declared themselves as *Safa-Hòr* (the pure men), after eschewing fowls, pigs and intoxicating liquor, but taking "gañja," (hemp, Canabinis Sativa) and tried to bring it on a line with Hindu practices. It led at a time to some local ferment and had also a political aspect. But beyond

1. Ref. *Dt. Gazetteer*, Santal Parganas, 1910, p. 145.

31 Mukherjea O. Y-4,8 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
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175 668 614 this we do not know anything and no light is available to assert that *Kharwar* was ever a clan name.

174 101 668 It should, however, be noted here that the Mayurbhanj Census Report, 1931, (Vol. I, p. 215) opines that "the present Santals are the descendants of the section of the tribe who became followers of Bhagirath (the leader of the Kharwar movement)—a Santal who endeavoured to start a movement to turn out the Sahibs and Zemindars out of the country and who was tried for sedition in 1871 and imprisoned at Bhagalpur where he died."

Gòndwars

114 614 The Santals of Mayurbhanj when questioned invariably answered that they were twelve clans, but they made no mention of the *Bedea* (supposed to be lost) and made up for the deficiency by mentioning *Gòndwars*. This was remarkable as in no other account do we come across such a name. In course of searching enquiries also we could not meet any *Gòndwar*. [The Mayurbhanj Census Report (1931, Vol. I, p. 192) also mentions the clan.]

614 563 829 The general belief among the Santals is that *Gòndwars* occupy a low position among them as they are supposed to be a cross between *Gònd-Muṇḍà* and *Santals*. There is in existence in Mayurbhanj a class of "Hansdak's" called "Gòndwar-Hansdak's" and they are considered distinctly low in the esti-

Sr Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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bani, Bara Palassy and Pipra areas of Santal Parganas, the special puja to Kali in the Dumka Subdivision, the assemblage *en masse* of the Santals in the past to sing and dance during Hindu festivals, have very deep implications that these are broad-based on a synthesis peculiar to Indian culture.

The infiltration made itself positively felt in the Santal Parganas in 1871, with variants repeated in 1942, when many Santals declared themselves as *Saſa-hor* (the pure men) after eschewing fowls, pigs, and intoxicating liquor but taking to *Ganja* (hemp, *Canabis Sativa*) and tried to bring it on a line with Hindu practices. It led for a time to some social ferment and had also political repercussions. This impact may be corroborated by a reference to the Census Report of 1931, when 586,499 Santals declared themselves as Hindus in Bihar and Orissa; and in the state of Mayurbhanj, 154,596 were returned as such. Added to these, there were movements for reclamation of the Santal to the Hindu fold, specially in Rajmahal, Balurghat and other areas. In 1936, it was claimed in the Santal Parganas, that due to their very recent activities (of the Hindu Mission), about a lakh of Santals came to the Hindu fold. In those times, we have seen, the Santals came to the Dúrgasthan at Dumka, to worship the goddess in their own rights as Hindus. They would recall that in their traditions and insti-

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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They would recall that in their traditions and institutes it was clearly stated that the early Santals (known as *Kharwars* then) had helped Ram Chandra to win the battle of Lanka against Ravana. In huge Santal rallies (held to declare themselves as Hindus) such speeches were heard, "Sri Ram Chandra used bows and arrows as we do. Sri Krishna was dark like us and played on the lute and tended cattle as we do. Why are we not Hindus?, We are." One irresistibly felt that here was the heart-throb of the Santal for centuries.

All these synchronised with a new awakening amongst the educated and enlightened Santals which culminated in the formation of organisations to maintain their social and political interests. One such, the *Hor Malto Marang Sabha*, was formed as early as 1932 on the initiative of E. S. Hoernle, I.C.S., Deputy Commissioner of the Santal Parganas. In course of time, it exerted a real influence on the government and the tribal people. The part that it played in safeguarding the rights of Santal tenants of Monghyr in the Bihar Tenancy Act was a creditable one as it secured his right against the disposal of his holding to *mahajans*. Gradually, however, a political programme came to the fore and such a bias was noticeable in the Adibasi Mahasabha, soon to follow at Ranchi. It sought to unify, at least the Proto-Australoids like the Santals, Mundas, Kharias, the Ho etc. in a

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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time or other. What I would especially draw attention to in this connection is the Mongoloid type and types resembling what is found in Assam, Burma and further on".

In summing up he writes "If we are to accept the tradition of the people, these either affirm or presuppose that since the time when the human race was split up into nations they have always been wandering in a more or less easterly direction—a direction which now-a-days also is followed by them in all their migrations. This would imply that they came into India from the north-west. I must confess that I personally was long of this opinion, and I have not given it up altogether, but I am more and more getting my eyes opened to the fact that the Santal and Munda peoples have their connections towards the East".

Santal Movements in Historical Periods:—From the above it appears that we are now not certain about their original home. From the ancient records available it appears that there is no doubt that the Santal began to settle in Chota Nagpur and its neighbouring areas during historic times. The earliest mention of them is recorded in an article of Sir John Shore entitled "Some Extraordinary Facts, Customs and Practices of the Hindus"[1]. In this article Sir John designates them as "Soontars", who were residing in Ramgarh. The first mention of the Santals in the district of Santal Parganas occurs in Montogomery Martin's Eastern India[2]. There are two references. In the first

1. Asiatic researches 1795.
2. Buchanan Hamilton's manuscripts.

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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it is written in the following words "it is only in Lakerdewani that some impure Taungtars have been permitted to work the cow, and the most violent opposition was at first made to such an atrocious innovation; but the obstinacy of the barbarians prevailed, chiefly, I believe, because they were thought powerful in witchcraft, and because disputes with such people were considered as dangerous". The second is "The tenants of Bihar in general transact their own business with the agents of the zamindars, and it is only among the rude tribe called Saungtar, and in the Bengalese parts of the district that a kind of chief tenant is employed to transact the whole affairs of the community.[1]" According to Hunter, "The Permanent Settlement for the land tax in 1700 resulted in a general extension of village, and the Santals were hired to rid the lowlands of the wild beasts which, since the great famine of 1769, had everywhere encroached upon the margin of cultivation. This circumstance was so noticeable as to find its way into the London papers, and from 1792 a new era in the history of the Santal dates."[1] Thus according to Hamilton the Santals came to Handwe and Belpalta between 1790 to 1810 from Birbhoom being oppressed by the Zamindars. Between 1815 to 1830 Sutherland and Ward noticed the Santals in the Dumka and Godda Damins. Mr. Dunbar, Collector of Bhagalpur shows that by 1836 no less than 427 villages had been established in Damin areas "inhabited by the Santals and Bhuiyas but chiefly by the former". The Santals entered this region and spread far afield without much opposition from the Paharias, (the Malers, the Mal-Paharias), and most of these Paharias slowly

1. Annals of Rural Bengal.

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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retired to the Rajmahal Hills. In 1851 Captain Sherwill found 83,265 Santals in Daminikoh alone.

Santal Rebellion (Hul) of 1855. Mr. Buchanan Hamilton has mentioned in his unpublished manuscipt that "the Santals has settled in the Dumka sub-division by 1809 having come last from Birbhum in consequence of the annoyance which they have received from its Zamindars". In 1818 Mr. Sutherland found them engaged in clearing the jungles under the hills in Godda sub-division. Mr. Dunbar, Collector of Bhagalpur, mentioned that by 1836 about 427 villages had been established by the Santals in the Damin area.

These Santals of the Daminikoh in the year 1855 became rebellious. The chief cause of this rebellion was the oppression of the Mahajans, the Darogas and the corruption of the Amlas. These Mahajans gave the Santals money as a loan with high interest and one he had contracted a debt he had little chance of escape, because if his creditor sued him, the Santals could not produce any authentic record, whereas the creditor had his ledgers and day book. These Mahajans sometimes without going to court to realise his capital and interest, sent his agents to take away their cattle forcibly. The Santals bore this oppression thinking that it was useless for them to obtain redress against the wealthy Mahajans, besides that had not enough money to pay the Amlas and Pleaders in the Court. If they approached the Court and loged a complaint against these Mahajans, they only got an order on the police to enquire and report, but the police generally sided with the Mahajans and submitted reports in their favour. [1 Erratum: i.e., "once." 2 Erratum: i.e., Mahajans. -- Analyst]

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175 648 669 426 The Santals of the Damin complained that they got different treatment than their neighbours the Suria Paharias and the Mal Paharias, and that the Santals who were living outside the Damin areas, were better off. Inside Damin the Zamindars ousted their Santal tenants from the lands they had cleared, although these lands had been settled with them by the Zamindars on long leases at low rates, on condition that they would clear the jungles. But as cultivation extended, the non-Santals forced the Santals to till some of their lands and thus they gradually extended their holdings, and ultimately appropriated the best portion of the lands in the village by exacting mortgages in return of loans. Thus the Santals moved to other parts where they settled by clearing fresh jungles and establishing new villages. Again they were forced to leave the [692] villages. When the Santals lodged complaints against the Mahajans in the court, no steps were taken by the executive (naibs, darogas etc.) as they were ready instruments in the hands of the Mahajans. The Santals who took loans from the Mahajan, could not pay in cash but worked out their debt by personal services, thus they became slaves in the hands of the creditor. The sons and daughters or his other nearest relations were also liable for this sort of service.

175 648 669 Due to all these oppressions the Santals were very much annoyed, and as a result of this in 1854 they attacked the houses of some Mahajans at night. The authorities caught them and treated them as dacoits. They were tried and convicted although they protested against it. After a year, again the same thing was repeated but this time the Government released them as it appeared that the crime was due to the oppression

1 [Erratum: this should read "Sauria". Cf. errata sheet, category 116, p. x -- Analyst]

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of the Mahajans. Then in the month of July 1855 a revolt broke out among the Santals, under the leadership of four brothers, Sidu, Khanu, Chandu and Bhairal[1] of the village Bhagnadihi situated South of Burhait.

Sidu and Khanu proclaimed themselves lords of the place under the title of Subahs and appointed other subordinate officers. Having in this way raised a general expectation of some great event among their countrymen the leaders hoped that the Government would enquire into the matter and redress their wrongs. When that was not done they demanded that the Government should redress their wrongs, failing which they would be compelled to take the law into their own hands to put an end to the persecution. Getting no response from the Government, a general order went through the encampment to move down towards Calcutta. Accordingly on the 30th June 1855 at full moon, several thousand Santals set out. As long as the food which they had brought from their villages lasted, the march was orderly but with the end of their own stock of provisions, the necessity for plundering arose. On the seventh of July of the same year, having heard of the gathering with two brothers at their head, a police officer accompanied with some sepoys went hurriedly to arrest them. After some discussion the police officer ordered his men to arrest them. Hearing the order of the Inspector the Santals were so enraged that they jumped upon him and bound him. Sidu their leader killed the Inspector with his own hand and the police left nine of their party dead in the Santal camp. This tactless procedure of the Inspector changed the whole trend of the Santal unrest and it took the form of rebellion, for at first they did not seem to have contemplated

1 [Erratum: this should read "Bhairab". Cf. errata sheet, category 116, p. ix -- Analyst]

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175 armed opposition to the Government. Their main
648 object was to march down to Calcutta in order to
669 place the petition of their grievances before the Governor-General. In July 1857 real rebellion started and several villages were burnt and looted. They attacked the house of Raja of Ambar at Kadamsair, near Pakur, and destroyed the Indigo factory and some railway works there. The Santal mob killed many English men including two English ladies.

The local authorities first took it as robbery, but at the end of July 1857 the Government finding it difficult to control the mob asked for more military help. Detachment after detachment poured in, native landlords supplied help to the troops on their march, and a special commissioner was appointed with extraordinary powers for the suppression of the rebellion.

All the troops were placed under the command of a Brigadier General but he had not got full and independent authority. An order was issued to him on the thirtieth of July stating that the military should not act independently of the civil power, but that the military operations should be entirely in the hands of the military commanders. The troops contacted the rebels at Mahespur and defeated them and their leaders, the four brothers, were wounded and several hundred Santals were killed. On the 24th July the troops took possession of Burhait, and Sidu the rebel ringleader was handed over to the troops by his own followers. Due to this military action quiet had been restored to some parts, but still there were a large number of Santals up in arms who took refuge in the jungle. After this an order was issued by the Government that those who would come in and submit within a week

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would be pardoned with the exception of the leaders and those who had committed murder. The Santals took this offer as a confession of weakness and in the month of September again renewed their activity. By the end of the month of September the area from Deoghar to the South Western border of the district came in the hands of the Santals. The Santals showed great bravery and reckless courage in the struggle against the military. As long as their national drums continued to beat, the whole party would stand and allow themselves to be shot down. 175 648 669 175 648 669 181

The Santals showed great bravery in this struggle and they did not understand yielding. Once forty Santals refused to surrender and took shelter inside a mud house. The troops surrounded the mud house and fired at them but the Santals answered with their arrows. Then the sepoys made a big hole through the wall, and the Captain ordered them to surrender but they again shot a volley of arrows through the half opened door. The sepoys started firing through the hole and the Captain again asked them to surrender but they continued shooting arrows. Some of the Sepoys were wounded. At last when the discharge of arrows from the door slackened, the Captain went inside the room with a Sepoy. He found only one old man greviously wounded, standing erect among the dead bodies. The Sepoy who accompanied the Captain asked him to throw away the arms but instead he rushed upon him and killed him with his battle axe. The Government was then compelled to proclaim Martial Law. As soon as the order for martial law went forth, the things assumed a very different appearance. The Santal rebels had to surrender and peace prevailed. 175 648 669

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The Governor understanding the mistake of his predecessors tried to appease the Santal by removing the genuine grievances. He made the Santal territory a separate district called Daminikoh, with four sub-districts, Dumka, Godda, Pakur and Rajmahal. The charge of these sub-districts were given to a Deputy Commissioner and four assistant Commissioners. The

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regular police was abolished and the duty of keeping peace and order and of arresting of criminals was vested in the hands of the parganait and the village headman.

In the social sphere also steps were taken to ameliorate the condition of the oppressed Santals. The

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money lenders were not permitted to extort their debts over and over again by recourse to trickery or otherwise. False weights and measures were corrected and cheating in this department was punished and the Santals could now sell their produce in the market witout fear of being swindled. The abolition of serf-

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dom and the new relationship between capital and labour were far reaching reforms, and the Santal could earn his living as a free worker on the Railway instead of being a slave of a powerful protector. Again, the

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beginning of tea plantations about this time gave a fresh impetus to profitable work and a higher economic level was achieved by the Santal, who further decided to migrate to the tea area, and on the expiry of the contract to return with a tidy some of money. Such a diverting of labour caused an easing in the struggle for existence among those who stayed at home and enabled the migrant to earn enough to establish himself securely for life.

Thus out of the rebellion came some lasting good and the Santals in the end benefited from it.

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796 177 Besides these, the Santals join in many of the Hindu festivals. In the *Durga Puja* ceremony the Santals come te[2] see the ceremoney and rejoice. Within their village they, both males and females, sing and dance together for these five days. The Santals • 175 177 796 perform the *Kali Puja*. Evidence of this can be ascertained from news published in one of the daily newspapers in the year 1933 on February 16th.

[204] "The Santal Guru Sannyasi Baba has sent the following letter to be District Magistrate, Malda :

> About a hundred Santals from Malda bring it to my notice that their annual Kali puja which was so long performed by their Sardar Jitu under my orders is going to be stopped. Unhappily, Jitu under a sad mistake died and the Santal Kali puja should not, on that account, be stopped. On the other hand, to allay this strained feeling amongst the Santals I propose to hold the Santal Kali puja at Malda myself. I assure you there will be no disturbance and not only that it will bring back the old good feelings so far as practicable under the circumstance.
>
> As the puja will be held in the month of Falgun I shall be highly obliged to recive an early reply to this letter at your earliest convenience. The annual Santal shooting passed off smoothly and the authorities allowed it and were satisfied."[1]

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[1] The Amrita Bazar Patrika, February 16, 1933.

2 [Erratum: this should read "to." Cf. errata sheet, category 116, p. ix -- Analyst]

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CHAPTER VII

Culture Contact

177 [128] In the concluding chapter I would like to assess the effect of the impact of alien cultures on the life and customs of the Santals of Santal Parganas.

175 648 The Santals according to O'Malley[1] came from Birbhum and first settled in the Santal Parganas between 1790 and 1810. Outside Santal Parganas the Santals had contact with the Hindus but this contact [186] was not very pleasant. They were oppressed by the Zamindars and Mahajans to such an extent that even now they call such non-Santals as "Diku" (those who trouble them). In the Santal Parganas also they were oppressed by the Zamindars and Mahajans, and when this oppression was unbearable in 1855 they became rebellious. After the rebellion the Government declared it as a restricted area. No body without the permission could enter the area. From this it appears that the contact 175 177 648 of the Santals with the Hindus in the Santal Parganas in the beginning was not cordial. Naturally the Santals at that time could not have borrowed much culturally from the Hindus. They rather tried to stick to their old customs which would preserve their entity and maintain unity in their rank.

175 177 999 **Alien Religious Movements and their effect on the Santal religion**: From the earliest records it appears that not much Hindu influence operated in the Santal Parganas to convert them, except for the Kharwar

1. Bengal District Gazetteers (Santal Parganas).

41 Biswas D, F.-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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movement which had some tinge of Hinduism. This movement was started in 1871. The leader of this movement was known as Bhagrit of Taldiha and a title of *'babaji'* was added to his name. The word *'babaji'* is a Hindu word and so it seems that it was taken from the Hindus. Later on he was arrested and imprisoned and for the time being this movement was suppressed. Again in 1880 it was revived by one Dubia Gosain who came from the vicinity of Deoghar. His activities were more pro-Hindu. Several Hindu practices were introduced by this movement and one distinguishing feature was the worship of the *'babaji'* in the manner of reverence paid to the Sanyasis by the Hindus. The religious side of the movement had a colouring of Hinduism. The *'babaji'* smeared his body with ashes, took ganja and kept long hair and worshipped Mahadeo (Siva).

It is probable that due to this Kharwar movement the Santals have introduced some Hindu deities—Kalimata, Lakhmi mai, (goddess of wealth) Parvati, Mahadeo etc. in their pantheon of *Bongas*. The Santals have belief in Rama and Krishna, the Hindu Avtars.

The word Thakur is sometimes used by them in place of their High God Cando. The word Thakur is of Sanskrit origin and the Hindus use this name for gods in general.

Some of the festivals of the Santals have Hindu counter parts. The Pata Parab of the Santals is the imitation of the Hindu festival "Charak Puja". In this puja the Hindus worship Siva (Mahadeo). The Santal Sankrat festival is equivalent to the Hindu Pous

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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elements have doubtless modified its practice among the Santals

Christian influence. In 1862 the Church missionary society started work in the Godda, Pakur and Rajmahal subdivisions and they built a colony for their converts in the Western Duars (in Godda). The Scandinavian Mission started their missionary activities in the Dumka subdivision in 1867. In 1884 the American Methodist Episcopal Mission started work in the Pakur subdivision. Other missions were the Christian Women's Board of Missions, a Wesleyen mission, which started work at Deoghar subdivision.

Thus it can be seen that after the Santal rebellion several Christian missions started their activities in and outside the Santal Parganas. It is stated in the Seventy fifth annual report of the Santal mission of Northern Churches (1941) that 25,000 Santals were converted. The record of missionaries has been a very creditable one in some respects, particularly in regard to education, sanitation, medical care and general raising of the standard of living, but in context of religion the missionary zeal has been somewhat misdirected. These converts are cut off from any activity that savours of worship of tribal *Bongas*. They do not contribute in cash or in kind to the offerings associated with village festivals. They do not take part in the worship of the five deities of the Jahersthan.

The converted Santals and even some non-Santals refer to Adam and Eve as *Pilchu Haram* and *Pilchu Burhi* who according to the tradition of the tribal Santals are the parents of mankind and the human race

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linear is an example of the danger in seeking to base racial history on linguistic affinities; but as recently as 1943 Professor S. K. Chatterji[1] speaks of the Austric race, in which he follows scholars like Schmidt and Hévésy.

The Santals first began to attract the attention of Europeans during the first half of the nineteenth century. The first book on the Santals, published in 1867, was entitled *Sonthalia and the Sonthals*. The writer, E. G. Man,[2] had by then been serving a period as an Assistant Commissioner in the newly formed district of the Santal Parganas. It is natural that the Santals attracted most attention in that district, where they were not only found in the greatest numbers, but where also they had risen in rebellion in 1855. Long before the rebellion the government had indeed become aware of their existence and of the special problems which they presented to the administration. An earlier report,[3] the result of an investigation into the land tenures of the "hill people", or Paharias, of the Raj Mahal hills, which had been written in 1819, could not fail to make some reference to the Santals, who at that period were engaged in a mass migration into the area and were driving the Paharias into the farther fastnesses of the hills. At an even earlier date Francis Buchanan's account[4] of the district of Bhagalpur in 1810–11 gives a short account of some "five hundred families" of Santals whom he found in the Dumka subdivision in 1809.

Another early account was published in W. W. Hunter's *Annals of Rural Bengal*.[5] The writer claimed little first-hand knowledge and based his description on information supplied by the American Baptist missionaries who began work among the Santals in the western portions of the Midnapore district and in Orissa. The first reference to the Santals in the papers of the American Free-Will Baptist Mission, as it was then called, is alive with all the excitement of a new discovery. In the journal of "Brother Noyes", under the date December 29, 1838, he records: "Came to a small village in the heart of a dense jungle. As soon as I came in sight of the houses, I felt persuaded I was coming among old acquaintances, they so much resembled the stick huts of the Coles of Cumbhulpore.

[1] S. K. Chatterji, *Oxford Pamphlets on Indian Affairs*, "The Linguistic Problem", 1943.
[2] E. G. Man, *Sonthalia and the Sonthals*, London, Calcutta, 1867.
[3] H. C. Sutherland, *Report on the Management of the Rajmahal Hills*, dated June 8, 1819, Deputy Commissioner's Record Room, Dumka.
[4] F. Buchanan, *An Account of the District of Bhagalpur in 1810–11*, Patna, 1939.
[5] W. W. Hunter, *Annals of Rural Bengal*, London, 1868.

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When I saw the jet-black people, with a necklace of white beads about their necks, and their peculiar dress, if dress it might be called, I was more confirmed in my opinion. I immediately alighted from my horse and inquired if that was a village of the Coles, but was not a little surprised at being so soon transported from the Oriyas to a people who could not understand a word I said. I looked about with astonishment at the romantic change, till at length I found an old man who could speak broken Oriya, of whom I gained the following information. He said they were not Coles, but Santals."[1] The author of the *Annals* relied largely on information supplied to him by the Rev. Jeremiah Phillips, who was a pioneer in the study of the language. The following occurs in the Annual Report of the mission for the year 1846: "During the past year Brother Phillips has acquired some knowledge of the language of this people (the Santals), by which he has been able to commence efforts for their improvement, which it is believed will result in great good to this hitherto neglected portion of the inhabitants of Orissa. He has performed a journey of some two or three weeks among them, which was very serviceable and interesting to him. He has published a tract of 8 pages, which is the first work ever published in the Santal dialect."

The Santals have been living in South-West Bengal for at least three hundred years. It is probable that they have been there for about five hundred years. There is agreement among the authorities that they moved to their present sites from the more hilly districts of Chota Nagpur farther west. It has been computed that the village of Rangibari in Bankura district is over three hundred years old.[2] Such a long period of residence on the one site is exceptional; the great majority of the Santal villages of today cannot look back on so long a history. Wherever a tradition regarding the founders of a village has survived, one finds that the first settlers moved to their present abode from no great distance away. Regarding Barikul, we are told: "The one who tied the brown hen here was Haru Mañjhi, whose family came first from Aurasuri in Bogri—a distance of about thirty-five miles. They say that formerly there were many wild elephants in Bogri, and for fear of the elephants many of the inhabitants fled to other parts. Sorup and Haru

[1] This and the following quotation I owe to the kindness of the Rev. A. A. Berg, who enabled me to see early reports in his possession.

[2] M. C. McAlpin, *A Report on the Condition of the Santals in the Districts of Birghum, Bankura, Midnapore and North Balasore*, IV (20), Bengal Government, 1909.

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Sorup and Haru Mañjhi were two brothers. Sorup Mañjhi left Bogri because of the elephants, came to Raipur and settled. He had established himself well at the end of a year or two, so he told his younger brother: 'Leave Bogri, where the elephants are on the increase. Some day you will be trampled on and killed. Come with me.' Haru Mañjhi thought to himself: 'True enough, many men have been killed; perchance they will kill me.' Thinking thus, he took all his children, left Bogri and came to Raipur. From Rautora in Raipur they established a village in Barikul, Sorup Mañjhi saying to his brother: 'Go to, brother, put up your huts and stay at Barikul.' Then Haru Mañjhi went out with his children, his cattle and his goats, and built his huts there. He had four boys and two girls; the girls they brought with them from Bogri, and the four boys were born in Barikul. He obtained sons-in-law for his daughters to live with them, and one or two tenants came together. In this way the village increased to many houses." Wild elephants, of which there are not so many now as formerly, do still on occasion cause great damage to ripening crops. Barikul was founded five generations ago, a period of about one hundred years. At that time there was also a possibility that by moving his abode the Santal could regain a measure of independence. The Santals have been spoken of as formerly "nomadic".[1] It may be that in the strict sense of the word they were in some remote period nomads. For any period of which we have record, however, they have been agriculturalists, though food-gathering and hunting provide them with important subsidiary occupations. Their migrations have been due to pressure of one kind and another. They prefer to move to forest lands where they will have a hard struggle to establish new settlements than to remain where they have to defend their holdings and their livelihood against hostile forces, whether these be wild animals, malignant actions directed against individuals or the community from the unseen world, or the oppression of landlords and moneylenders.

The last cause operated to produce a great northward movement in the early decades of the nineteenth century, and finally goaded them into rebellion. The Santal rebellion has been frequently described.[2] It took place in an area remote from the Bankura district, but it has to be mentioned because it created

[1] P. O. Bodding, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Santal Parganas*, ed. L. S. S. O'Malley, Calcutta, 1910.

[2] J. H. Hutton, *Modern India and the West*, ed. L. S. S. O'Malley, Oxford, 1941. Chapter on the Primitive Tribes, pp. 417-44. Also bibliography.

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175 648 669 [538] [533] a great stir throughout the Santal country. The story has become part and parcel of the consciousness of Santals everywhere, and the leaders are still celebrated in songs that are current far from the places in which they performed their exploits. The rebellion had no direct connection with the Sepoy mutiny. Both risings did, however, originate in the unsettled state of the country and the inexperience of the British authorities. The Santals rose against the intolerable rapacity of the moneylenders, with whom the subordinate officials of the government, and particularly the police, were in league. It became necessary to call out strong armed forces to restore law and order before the grievances could be redressed. The rebellion followed a pattern one might expect when ill-armed rioters faced armed and disciplined troops. The Santals gathered, sometimes numbered in thousands, and proceeded to plunder the nearby bazaar towns. In the first flush of indignation and excitement they sought out their enemies, murdering police officials and moneylenders, as also other hapless individuals who came in their way. The alarmed government dispatched strong military forces to the area and proclaimed martial law. The disturbances dragged on in sporadic fashion for over two years, at the end of which the constructive measures of the government began to take effect. A new district was set up with special regard to the need for protecting the land of the Santals, and their village system was used in the organization set up for maintaining order by giving a measure of responsibility to their tribal officials.

175 648 [423] Since that date the history of the Santals has been peaceful and some measure of progress has been achieved. It was not however, until the second decade of the twentieth century that the Bengal Government passed an Act—the Bengal Tenancy Amendment Act, 1918—which endeavoured to protect Santals and other aboriginals in Bengal in similar fashion. It prohibited the transfer of land from aboriginals without the permission of the courts and prevented the attachment of their lands for debts arising out of causes other than the non-payment of rent.

175 426 648 423 By that time most of the damage had been done, and consequently the Santals are now overwhelmingly in the position of under-tenants. The background of their economic life can be seen in the following example, which is typical rather than peculiar. In 1896 the villagers of Ramboni borrowed the sum of forty rupees from their landlord in order to excavate an irrigation tank on their land. In the year 1913 they were sold

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up for non-payment of the accumulated debt, which by then was a considerably larger sum. They were thus compelled to make new agreements with their landlord at an enhanced rent and with inferior rights. The later passage of legislation has done little to lift the burden of despair about the future which is an unhappy characteristic of Santal life today. Such incidents explain in no small measure the cry of the heart which is heard from time to time: "Give us back our land." It is some consolation that the Act of 1918, followed by legislation during the last twenty years aimed at improving the status of the peasantry in Bengal, has brought to a close some of the worst chapters in a long and sordid story.

The community life of the Santal centres in his village, and is so organized as to make common action inevitable in social, economic and religious affairs. The houses are built on either side of the village street, which must be left wide enough for two bullock carts to pass each other. This street extends from east to west, the eastern end being known as the upper end. The houses, set close together, have their main door opening on to the village street, and each household is responsible for the state of the road outside its own residence. It is here in the village that the Santal learns how to live; here he is initiated into the traditional loyalties of the tribe, and the village of his birth exercises a deep influence over him all his days.

The village headman, or *manjhi*, is the man of greatest consequence in the community. The post is hereditary, and it passes ordinarily to the eldest son of the former headman. When the direct line of succession fails through lack of sons or from incapacity on the part of the natural heir, the office passes on to a brother or near relative on the paternal side. The history of the village is preserved in the tradition handed down concerning the headman's ancestry. For example, at Sarenga they tell a story of the three brothers who were the founders of the village and divided the village offices between them. Among them Lokhon has acquired the greatest measure of renown, and he is commemorated by a shrine outside the present village. The story is told that he died suddenly, and before the news of his death had spread through the village his spirit took possession of a young man sitting in the courtyard of a house some distance away, and through him Lokhon told the villagers that they were to make a special shrine for him. There is a ceremony at the beginning of each new year which suggests that at one time the appointment of the head-

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The years pass, indistinguishable one from another except when famine or other calamity makes a landmark on which the memory will fasten in the years to come. Ten years ago many of the older men dated their birth according to whether they were born before or after "Seventy-two", the Bengali year 1272, when a disastrous famine broke up many families. Another memorable year was the year of the influenza epidemic that followed the close of the 1914–18 war, and young people today can calculate their age in relation to the year of the *malot*, or epidemic. The division of the year into months is somewhat vague, for whereas the only names for the months now current are the twelve months of the Bengali calendar, the Santal reckoning is based on the moon. As one man remarked: "We sometimes have to slip a month." In 1939, when this statement was made, there was confusion in the Santal calendar between *Bhador* (the Bengali month extending through a part of August and September) and *San*, the month that precedes it. Names are given to the phases of the moon according to its shape. Thus I was told: "The *Ende* (the Ind festival which in West Bengal is associated with Dharma worship) is observed during the month of *Bhador*, when the moon is shaped like an open umbrella."

The days of the week also have Bengali names, and the day is divided into periods, the names of which relate in some cases to the meals taken, in other cases to the duties which have to be performed or to a more general association of the time. When Santals wish to make an appointment at a particular time it is sufficient to point to the position in the sky where the sun will have climbed. Some time before dawn it is "little cockcrow", and this is followed by "cockcrow". *Basiam*, the time when breakfast is taken, is divided into three parts: "child *basiam*", "*basiam*" and "bent *basiam*". The word *basiam*, meaning "leftover", is a reminder that the breakfast consists of a small quantity of cold rice or rice gruel, cooked with the evening meal on the previous day and kept for the morning, when it is eaten with a little salt. The late afternoon is called the "time when women draw water". One way of describing a short period is to relate it to the time taken in boiling a pot of rice. Work is continued until the shadow of a house or a tree falls across a particular spot. It happens frequently that children draw a line outside their schoolhouse, so that when the shadow of the building falls across the line they know it is time to go home. A man who was in the habit of sleeping in

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CHAPTER 13

THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

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WHEN "Brother Noyes" in the year 1838 "came to a small village in the heart of a dense jungle"[1] somewhere on the borders of Bengal and Orissa, a new factor was introduced in the history of the Santals. Those pioneer missionaries, American Baptists of the early nineteenth century, seem to have felt early the charm of the Santals. The following extract from the journal of Jeremiah Phillips for February 10, 1841, is typical of the attitude pervading the first reports: "Spent the morning in making up a vocabulary of Santal words. Obtained about 150 words. *P.M.* Hearing that there would be a large dance some three or four miles off, and as most of our villagers had gone, we determined to go also. On our way we overtook a company of men, women and children, dressed in their nicest cloths, singing and skipping about in the most delightful manner. On arriving at the spot, we found some six hundred people assembled in a circular enclosure, in the centre of which a few leaves of the *sarl* tree were placed upon some rough images of elephants, horses, crocodiles, etc. Around these were some two hundred women, while in the outer part of the circle a large company of musicians, followed by the men, were marching round at a varied pace, the weaker sex in the centre more leisurely. The scene was pleasant to witness; it is so seldom that we see anything like activity, that we delight to gaze even upon a dance. The highest bliss to which an Oriya aspires is to stuff himself till he can eat no more, and then lie down to sleep in the sun. This constitutes his happiness here, and in his opinion will constitute his happiness hereafter. But here appears to be a very different people. Wherever we have been, we have found the women mingling with the men, in their labours and in their recreations; and they do not appear to be considered inferior. The consequence is they look like human beings – they respect themselves."[2] The American Baptists at work in the Midnapore district of Bengal as well as in Orissa were the first to give the Santals some literature, and as soon as possible they developed an extensive system of primary educa-

[1] See Chapter 1, p. 3.

[2] This extract occurs in the Eighth Annual Report of the Freewill Baptist Foreign Missionary Society, read and accepted at the anniversary meeting at Topsham, New England, on October 7, 1841. Other passages also have been published in a paper entitled "Early Records concerning the Santals", *Man in India*, Vol. XXV, 1945, by the present writer. See also footnote 1 on page 4.

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tion without losing sight of their main objective, the presentation of the Christian Gospel. One of their missionaries wrote in 1865: "We have by no means lost sight of the all-important fact that secular education without heart culture is of very little consequence. Hence, we have ever made the spiritual instruction of the people as prominent as possible. . . ."[1]

The main missionary effort developed in the north after the tragic rebellion of Santals had directed public attention to their affairs. The Santal Mission of the Northern Churches published its Seventy-Fifth Annual Report in 1941 and reported a total community of over 25,000 Christians. This mission, with supporting committees in Norway, Denmark and America, grew out of the pioneer work of a remarkable Norwegian, Lars Olsen Skrefsrud, and his Danish companions, Mr. and Mrs. Boerresen. Resigning from the Gossner Lutheran Mission, they began work independently and established a mission station at Benagaria in 1867. Skrefsrud, who was in every sense a giant of a man, prepared an *Introduction to the Grammar of the Santali Language*, which was published in 1873. It is to his enthusiasm and interest that we owe the account of the Santal traditions published in Santali in 1887. His linguistic work was carried forward and developed by the great scholar P. O. Bodding. To their efforts more than to any other cause the Santals owe the fact that Santali has developed a literature. The first efforts of the missionaries were aimed at providing the scriptures, song books and reading primers, for which purpose the Roman script was adapted, but a great stimulus to the study by the Santals of their own institutions was provided by the publication of the traditions.[2] This mission also publishes the only Santali periodical, which is now in its twenty-sixth year. Other societies that have made notable contributions to missionary work in the Santal Parganas and neighbouring areas are the Church Missionary Society and the Church of Scotland, the latter being particularly noted for the excellent service of medical missionaries at Bamdah. The Santal members of the different Church bodies are brought together in the meetings of the Santal Christian Council, a body that was established in 1934 and is the only organization of any kind that brings together Santals

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[1] Stacy, *Life of Otis Robinson Bachelor*, p. 318, quoted from *Primary Education among Santals of Midnapore*, 1931, A Survey with Proposals, by Lewis Clayton Kitchen, Calcutta.

[2] *Mare Hapramko reak' Katha*, Dumka (1st ed., 1887). An English translation by P. O. Bodding was published in Oslo in 1942, entitled *Traditions and Institutions of the Santals*.